



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE TOPICAL METHOD IN THE STUDY OF VERGIL

BY FRANK J. MILLER
The University of Chicago

Mr. Samuel Clemens once wittily spoke of Julius Caesar as the man who wrote a textbook for beginners in Latin. It might be said with equal pertinency that Vergil was the poet who composed a work for the especial behoof of high-school seniors, so widespread is the use of the first half of the *Aeneid* in that part of the high-school curriculum, and so widely are the works of Vergil ignored in the curricula of the higher schools. I should rather say, "have been ignored," for it is a matter of much interest to Vergilians to note the growing attention that is being paid by college professors, both in their graduate and undergraduate courses, to the long-neglected second half of the *Aeneid*, as well as to the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*. But, even with this improvement in the status of Vergil, the fact remains that very few college graduates have any knowledge of this poet beyond that which they acquired in the high school; and, worse yet, many teachers of Vergil have very little definite and first-hand knowledge of the works of Vergil as a whole. Add to this the fact that the textbooks confine themselves almost entirely to the first six books of the *Aeneid*, and that, in this country at least, there is no edition of Vergil prepared primarily for college students, and we have a pretty fair statement of the case of Vergil versus the American People.

In what I have already said, I would not be understood as deprecating the general use of Vergil in the secondary school. On the contrary, I regard the year spent in the study of this poet as one of the best things in the whole high-school course. The hope and purpose of this paper is to make a few suggestions by which the study of Vergil in the secondary schools may be made more effective, and to point the way to the more general adoption of Vergil as a college author.

I have entitled my paper "The Topical Method in the Study of Vergil." This recognizes as a matter of course the necessity of some well-defined and worked-out method. We are only too familiar with

the unprofitable results of a methodless year in Vergil, where teacher and class plunge into the year in September and emerge therefrom in June, having read and parsed from twenty-five to fifty lines a day, for some two hundred days. They aimed at nothing in particular, and they hit nothing in particular; the result—a confused general knowledge of a piece of a poem, a weary wondering as to what it is all about, a practical certainty that the student will never care to seek a more intimate acquaintance with the author. It is from such study that the boy came, who, when asked in a college-entrance examination to name and outline the works of Vergil, replied: "Vergil wrote the Ovid."

Yes, we must have a definite purpose, and we must strive to find the best method by which to accomplish this purpose. We must decide before we start just exactly what we expect to accomplish by a year spent in the study of Caesar, or Cicero, or Vergil. We must be clear in our own minds as to what are the all-essential things, and what are the greatly-to-be-desired things in the study of a given author, and then work definitely toward these things. Now, as to Vergil, I suppose that none of us will seriously disagree with Professor Johnston of Indiana in his dictum as to the all-essential things, which he has so well elaborated in a paper on the teaching of Vergil. These he thinks to be two: the study of versification, and the study of poetical usage.

Here, then, we have two things at which to aim in our study of Vergil: a first-hand knowledge of the principles of hexameter verse-structure, and an understanding of that license in etymological and syntactic usage in which the poet indulged under the stress of metrical exigency. But, while granting the prime importance of these aims, are we content to stop here? Shall we not insist upon passing beyond and through the form to the thought—the substance and material of the poem itself? If the poem is only a story, must not our students know the story in its entirety? If it is more than a story, must we not seek to discover what were the great, and, to him, inspiring lessons and ends which Vergil was trying to work out through the medium of the story? If the poem is a great national epic, inspired by high, patriotic motives, and an ardent desire on the poet's part to bring his countrymen into a realizing sense of Rome's greatness and glory,

not as a present possession, but as an inheritance from a remote past; if he is striving everywhere to show that all this history was divinely appointed and inspired; then surely we have studied Vergil amiss if we have not seriously directed our thought to these problems and arrived at some at least tentative solution.

In addition to these great topics for investigation, there are numerous subsidiary and collateral themes, which the student who has been taught to attack any one problem and solve it by observation and comparison will inevitably follow out. And here we touch the vital point; the idea of *investigation* in connection with what must in the nature of things, in the high school at least, always be primarily a reading course. Professor Johnston has, in the paper to which I have already referred, given an admirable presentation of methods of investigation into Vergil's verse structure and poetic usage. The student, following along these lines, must inevitably gain, not merely a knowledge of the matters in question, but, what is more important still from the standpoint of all his subsequent work, a method and spirit of research which will make him in the truest sense a student.

Now the topical method, to which this paper is addressed, is this same research method carried into as many lines as it is possible to follow under given circumstances. The objection will at once be raised: How can the required work in translation be done if any considerable work along these lines be attempted in addition? The answer to this objection is easy to find: (1) the plan entails little extra work, being simply a method of procedure and not an added task; and (2) the translation of the text is a necessary means to the end proposed, and is vastly enhanced and stimulated thereby. The *modus*, then, would be somewhat as follows: (1) Let a list of from ten to twenty live topics for study be proposed at the beginning of the course, or they may be left to suggest themselves as they arise; (2) The material relating to these topics may be noted and discussed daily in the class when it meets for the assigned translation; (3) One of these topics may be assigned to each member of the class, who thus becomes especially responsible for the collection of all the material bearing upon his topic, and for the presentation of this in the form of a finished paper at the end of the course; (4) The teacher himself may be a fellow-student with his class and take a topic for his own investi-

gation. The results of the adoption of this method in place of the weary threshing-over of old straw, consisting of the endless repetition of questions on well-known syntax and of petty corrections, can easily be imagined but not thoroughly appreciated by one who has not actually tried it in the classroom.

All that has been said above with reference to the topical or research method in the secondary school is still more pertinent to the college course in Vergil. I shall give at the end of this paper a list of topics for study in Vergil which may be used with profit.

Meanwhile, let us turn to the colleges and universities, and see what is actually being offered by way of advanced courses in this author. A survey of the catalogues of the colleges and universities of the United States for the year 1905-6 reveals the fact that only thirty of these offer courses in Vergil which may be counted as advanced courses. This does not include those reading courses in the first six books of the *Aeneid* which are evidently offered in the freshman year for those students who have not offered Vergil for admission.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY COURSES IN VERGIL

The courses which we are considering may be classified as follows:

1. *Rapid reading courses* in the *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and the second half of the *Aeneid*, often joined with similar readings in other authors. Such courses were offered by Bryn Mawr, Boston University, Cornell, Kansas, Illinois, Oberlin, Smith, Tufts.

2. *Courses in Vergil from the standpoint of literary history*.—Such were Bryn Mawr, "Roman epic: Ennius, Vergil, Lucan;" Bowdoin, "Roman epic: Vergil and Lucan, with comparison of Statius, Valerius Flaccus, and Silius Italicus;" Brown, "Vergil: *Bucolics*, with special reference to literary sources and influence; *Georgics* and *Aeneid*, with special reference to the history of the times;" Chicago, "Vergil: the *Georgics*, dealing with the history of didactic poetry, with Vergil's diction and his treatment of the hexameter, with the construction of the *Georgics* and with their religious and patriotic temper;" "Roman epic poetry;" "The life and works of Vergil: sources of our knowledge of the life of Vergil; the development of his art; the relation of his subjects to the Roman national consciousness; selected readings;" "History of Vergilian criticism: the ancient,

mediaeval, and modern masters of Vergilian interpretation and criticism will be studied, and their attitude and method noted;" Columbia, "Roman epic poetry;" Cornell, "Virgil pro-seminar: History and development of Latin epic down to Statius; textual and exegetical study of selected portions of Virgil;" Dartmouth, "Vergil: translation, and discussion of the following subjects: epic, didactic, and pastoral poetry before Vergil; the life of Vergil; his sources and the influence of other writers upon him; the mediaeval conception of Vergil;" Denison, "Virgil: a study of the poems of Virgil and their place in the history of literature from points of view which cannot be emphasized in the preparatory course to which the subject is usually confined;" Michigan, "Virgil: *Georgics*; interpretation, and lectures on the Roman writers on agriculture;" Northwestern University, "Vergil: *Bucolics* and *Georgics*; lectures introductory to the study of Vergil and the Roman epic;" Syracuse, "Readings from the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, with lectures on Roman pastoral and didactic poetry; Vassar, "Vergil: *Bucolics*, *Georgics*, *Aeneid* vii-xii; a literary study of the works of Vergil, his sources and his influence."

3. *Courses in Vergil involving investigation along the line of special topics.*—California, "Vergil: *Georgics*; reading, translation, exegesis; theory of the Vergilian hexameter, and the art of reading classical poetry;" Chicago, "Vergil: *Aeneid*, vii-xii, read with especial reference to the study of the *Aeneid* as a national epic;" "Topical studies in the works of Vergil, offered by correspondence; a series of studies pursued by the student upon selected topics under the guidance and criticism of the instructor;" Columbia, "Virgil, *Eclogues*; Ovid, selections; lectures and readings on Roman life and thought;" Iowa, "The works of Vergil: literary studies covering Vergil's complete works;" Michigan, "Studies in Virgil;" Northwestern, "The entire *Aeneid*: preparation of papers on assigned topics, with lectures;" Stanford, "Seminar in Vergil: *Bucolics* and *Aeneid*; the latter is studied in its entirety as a work of art, and selected passages in the first six books are interpreted; attention is paid to Vergil's influence on mediaeval and modern literature; the course is of special importance to teachers" (see under paragraph 5 below); Syracuse, "Vergil: critical study of the entire *Aeneid*, its literary merits, ethical and religious ideas;" Washington University,

"Vergil: rapid reading of the whole *Aeneid*, with selections from *Bucolics* and *Georgics*; the following subjects will be considered in discussion and in topical papers; Vergil and Homer; Vergil's relation to Ennius and Lucretius; Vergil as a national poet; the place of the *Aeneid* in the literary and political movements of the Augustan age; Vergil's epical technique, etc.;" Wisconsin, "The last six books of the *Aeneid* are read in class, with selections from Vergil's other works; lectures and assigned readings on topics connected with the course."

4. *Advanced courses devoted to critical study and exegesis.*—Kansas, "Vergil: a rapid survey of the contents of the *Aeneid*, and a critical study of selected passages which involve difficulties of interpretation or of text criticism; the course is intended both as an introduction to the methods of graduate work, and as a practical course for teachers;" Nebraska, "Critical study of select passages from Vergil."

5. *Courses intended primarily as training courses for teachers.*—Chicago, "Vergil: teachers' training course, including special study of metrical structure, poetic usage, and other pertinent topics, together with a discussion of the best methods of presenting these to a high-school class;" Kansas, see under paragraph 4 above; Michigan, "Teachers' course: lectures on Virgil;" Stanford, "Seminar in Vergil: *Bucolics* and *Aeneid*;" see under paragraph 3 above; Yale, "Vergil: an introduction to Vergil for students who expect to teach; practice in the use of the best editions, and of other critical and exegetical helps."

6. *Courses emphasizing translation and metrical reading as an art.*—Cornell, "Virgil: *Aeneid* vii-xii; no prepared translation is required; the professor translates the text himself before the class; the emphasis is laid on the reading of the lines as Virgil would have read them; the special aim is to develop in the student the ability to understand and appreciate the Latin without translation;" Illinois, "Vergil and Horace in English translation;" Pennsylvania, "Vergil: metrical translation; expressive reading of Latin verse; uses of mythology in literature and art."

Such a showing for Vergil in the colleges is indeed encouraging, and points, it is to be hoped, to a still further recognition of the Mantuan.

TOPICA VERGILIANA

Following is a list of topics for study in Vergil, many of which will be found adapted for use in the high school, while all may profitably be used in college classes.

I. *General topics, the field for whose investigation lies for the most part outside of Vergil's works.*

1. The characteristics which made the Augustan age an age of literature; Vergil's relation to this age.

2. Vergil's poetical background and environment, the poets of his age and their relation to him.

3. The sources of Vergil's literary inspiration: (a) Greek, (b) Roman.

4. The story of Vergil's life and the original sources of our knowledge of this.

5. The estimate of Vergil in his own and later centuries; in the Middle Ages; contemporaneous and later references.

II. *General topics for outside investigation, involving at the same time an investigation of Vergil's works.*

6. The influence of Vergil upon later Latin literature, and upon other literatures, especially English.

7. The visible impress of historical personages and events upon the poetry of Vergil.

8. The characteristics of the Alexandrine school, and the extent to which Vergil was influenced by it.

9. The schools of philosophy under whose influence Vergil wrote and the traces of these in his works.

10. The place of the *Aeneid* in the development of Roman epic.

11. The extent, range, and method of Vergil's imitations.

12. The imitators of Vergil.

13. The *Eclogues*: a literary sketch and appreciation; compared with other pastoral poetry.

14. The *Eclogues*: their literary and personal inspiration; the order of their composition and publication; the impress of historical events upon them; their place in Vergil's literary career.

15. The amoebean verse as illustrated in the *Eclogues*; compared with stichomythia in dramatic composition.

16. The fourth *Eclogue* and the Golden Age; the literature of the Golden Age in general.

17. The *Georgics*: their sources as to facts; their literary models and their personal inspiration; their purpose, method of composition, time and place of writing, time and circumstances of publication.

18. The *Georgics*, as an example of didactic poetry; compared with other Greek and Roman literature of agriculture; Vergil as a practical farmer.

19. A literary sketch and appreciation of the *Georgics*.

20. The *Aeneid*: its archaeological and literary sources; its time, place, and method of composition; date of publication; Vergil's plan for its completion; his own estimate of it, etc.

21. The Aeneas legends, and Vergil's use of these; his own creations.

22. Theories as to the plan and purpose of the *Aeneid*.

23. Vergil's own foreshadowings of the *Aeneid*.

24. The story in the *Aeneid*.

25. The *Aeneid* as a story; Vergil's models for this.

26. Elements in Vergil which commended him to the early Christian Fathers; estimate in which he was held by them.

27. Elements which gave Vergil the reputation of a magician among the mediaeval writers.

28. Vergil as a poet of nature; the classical and romantic schools as developed in English literature.

III. *Topics involving intensive study of Vergil's poetry alone.*

29. The *Aeneid* as a national epic.

30. The national element in the *Georgics* as compared with the *Aeneid*.

31. The *Aeneid* in its relation to Augustus, and to the popularization and establishment of his régime.

32. The religious and ethical ideals of the *Aeneid*; Vergil's attitude toward the gods.

33. The supernatural element in Vergil's works; the *deus ex machina*, or the dramatic use of the supernatural.

34. Omens, oracles, and portents.

35. Glimpses of the Trojan Penates in the *Aeneid*, and the establishment of the Trojan religion in Italy.

36. Vergil's conception of the soul and its destiny; his contribution to the literature of eschatology.
37. Fatalism in Vergil: what is fate? What is the relation of Jupiter and the other gods to this?
38. Vergil's art as a story-teller; his method of selecting and handling his material.
39. Vergil's descriptive art; genre painting.
40. The dramatic element in Vergil's work.
41. Vergil's use of mythology.
42. Autobiographical material in Vergil.
43. Vergil's contribution to our knowledge of the geography of ancient Italy.
44. Vergil's contribution to our knowledge of ancient Italian history and archaeology.
45. Vergil's attempts at etymology.
46. Vergil's power of characterization, illustrated in his Aeneas, Turnus, Mezentius, Dido, Camilla, etc.
47. Vergil's conception of woman as illustrated in the *Aeneid*.
48. Indications in the *Aeneid* that it needs the revision which Vergil intended to give it: unfinished lines, inconsistencies, etc.
49. Poetical constructions in Vergil; their relation to meter.
50. Vergil's verse and its metrical peculiarities.
51. The part that metrical exigency plays in the poetry of Vergil.
52. Vergil's use of meter for descriptive purposes.
53. The rhetorical value of exegetical repetition as illustrated in Vergil.
54. Alliteration, assonance, and kindred effects.
55. Vergil's use of pathos as a rhetorical device.
56. The epithet as a rhetorical figure in Vergil.
57. Vergil's use of metaphor and simile.